

Treasury Department,

Bureau of the Mint,

Washington, D. C. May 31, 1899.

Mr. A. J. Ralston,
President, Selby Smelting & Lead Co.,
San Francisco, California.

I regret that the reduction in charges ordered at the San Francisco Mint should seem to be a hardship to your Company, and have no appearance to you of an act of hostility and aggression. You are a great industry, with a field so much wider than the Government's refinery that it does not seem to me possible that the latter can seriously interfere with your business. We do, it is true, serve one class of customers in common, but you serve so many more that it does not seriously damage you for us to now reduce our San Francisco rates to those maintained at New York and Philadelphia for many years. The rates at the San Francisco Mint have been practically unchanged for twenty years. When they were adopted they were probably high, and the cost of operating the refinery was probably more than that of operating the refineries in the East. But I find that neither wages nor materials cost more at the present time in the San Francisco Mint than in the New York Assay Office. I find that the by-products sell for as much in San Francisco as in New York. Hence, I find justification for the higher charges in San Francisco.

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There may be room for argument over the maintenance of refineries by the Government, but it seems to me clear that while they are maintained they should be run as advantageously as possible and according to the purpose of the law. It can scarcely be maintained that fair rates of twenty years ago are fair rates now.

I do not find in your letters anything to show that there is social loss to you or injustice in having the rates go into effect June 1st, rather than July 1st. Your objections are general and would apply July 1st or next year as well as now. We prefer have them go into effect early in the season. The Seattle Office, which must now collect the San Francisco Mint charges, has been collecting Philadelphia charges and it is desirable that this change shall go into effect before the season's output from the North begins to move there. The Seattle Office has been notified that the San Francisco charges will be the same as those for Philadelphia after June 1st. Very likely word to that effect has been given out, and it would cause confusion to recall it.

I do not see my way to go to San Francisco at this time, probably will not be there this year. For these reasons I deem best to let the order stand.

Very truly yours,



George Washington
Director of the Mint.

Treasury Department,
Bureau of the Mint,
Washington, D.C.,

May 31, 1899.

Mr. A. J. Ralston,
President, Selby Smelting & Lead Co.,
San Francisco, California

Sir:

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There may be room for argument over the maintenance of refineries by the Government, but it seems to me clear that while they are maintained they should be run as advantageously as possible and according to the purpose of the law. It can scarcely be maintained that fair rates of twenty years ago are fair rates now.

I do not find in your letters anything to show that there is actual loss to you or injustice in having the rates go into effect June 1st, rather than July 1st. Your objections are general and would apply [to] July 1st, or next year as well as now. We prefer to have them go into effect early in the season. The Seattle Office, which must now collect the San Francisco Mint charges, has been collecting Philadelphia charges and it is desirable that this change shall go into effect before the season's output from the North begins to arrive there. The Seattle Office has been notified that the San Francisco charges will be the same as those for Philadelphia after June 1st. Very likely word to that effect has been given out, and it would cause confusion to recall it.

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Very truly yours,
[Signature] George E. Roberts
Director of the Mint.